

[S. A. Friedlander]

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Mr. Friedlander is about 70 years old. He was born in Brezowitz, Hungary, where he attended Hebrew school, and where he heard some of the stories he tells, and came to this country when he was fifteen. He has attended various synagogues in New York, and owes most of his tales to the latter source. The fact that his stories are in large proportion about Chassidim (Polish Jews) he attributes to the richness of the lore treating of the Chassidic sects, lore that spread to all European countries and followed to America.

Mr. Friedlander accompanied his telling of stories with gesture and jistrionic effects, indicating the dignity of the Rabbi and the mumility of the disciple, or vice versa as the occasion demanded. He spoke both in Jewish and English. It was impossible for him to give any idea of the exact sources of these stories, except that they were to be heard, among Jews, particularly the orthodox, before and after prayers in the synagogue, or after study of the Talmud, as an aid to relaxation. The Dowry

In Galicia lived a widow and her daughter. The daughter was betrothed to a merchant, who kept postponing the marriage because the widow could not provide the dowry which her husband, when he was alive, had promised. As she had no prospect of raising this dowry, the widow in desperation went to the house of her brother, a wealthy man, and pleaded with him to provide the dowry. This her brother refused to do. Whereupon the widow, in tears, went to the Rabbi and told him of her predicament.

"How much do you require for the dowry?" asked the Rabbi.

"Four hundred gulden," replied the widow, "and although my brother, wealthy as he is, can readily spare this amount he has refused to give even one gulden."

"We shall see," said the Rabbi solemnly. "Go home now and be patient. God will help."

The season passed and yet no dowry was forthcoming, and the merchant again postponed his marriage to the widow's daughter.

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The widow thereupon returned to the Rabbi, who again asked that she be patient, and assured her that God would help.

On the eve of Yom Kippur, the Jews of the town gathered at the synagogue, and among them was the rich brother of the widow. The Kol Nidre had scarcely been begun, when this brother fell back in a fit of suffocation. His face blue, the veins of his neck swollen, he cried for a drink of water. Now when the Jews saw his plight they were in a quandary, for it is forbidden either to eat or to drink on the eve and of the day of Yom Kippur. As it seemed the man would die if he were not given water, the services were interrupted so that advice could be asked of the Rabbi.

"Allowance can be made, as it seems the man will die unless he is given water," advised the Rabbi. "But first he must promise to donate, for a purpose that will be approved of by God, four hundred gulden."

When this sum, gratefully promised, was delivered after the holiday to the Rabbi, he delivered it in turn to the widow, who thus was able to provide her daughter with a dowry.

The Power of Making One Weep

There was once a Maggid (a Yiddish Billy Sunday) who traveled from town to town and delivered sermons that had the power of making people weep. It was from this power that

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he derived his livelihood, for in proportion as he drew tears from his audiences so he drew also donations.

There came a time, however, when donations kept growing smaller, from which he could only conclude that his power of drawing tears was diminishing. What proves this to him beyond doubt was that whereas he had always been able to count on the sound of weeping for inspiration was lacking.

He determined therefore to make a last test of his power. He would speak and speak, for a whole evening, and if not a single voice responded with weeping, it would be to him as an ultimatum to seek otherwise for bread.

That evening, in a synagogue well filled, he began his final test. He spoke and spoke, and when most of the evening passed without the sound of a voice weeping, he could hardly continue for despair. Just as he began to feel that he could no longer go on speaking, so deathly was the silence that greeted his tenderest words, a most gratifying interruption took place: an outburst of wretchedness, a wailing voice, as if somewhere a string had snapped, a heart had broken.

He made haste, when in triumph he finished his sermon, to seek out this chord that had so wonderfully responded.

"Tell me," he said to the man whose eyes were still moist, "what was it in my speech that made you weep?" This he asked, not so much because he desired flattery as to discover what note it had been that had stroke the chord.

"I can explain it only this way," said the man, fresh tears filling his eyes. "Not long ago I had a cow that provided me with 2 much milk. This cow, for a reason that still mystifies me, one day lay down and died. Now it so happened that at that time hides went up in price, so I was able to sell my cow's hide for a good price. With the money I got I bought a goat. The goat gave milk, not so generously as the cow, but I had no reason to complain. Then one

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day the goat lays down and dies. As I listened to you, your whiskers going up and down and your bleating reminded me of my goat, and to think that he died broke my heart.”

***** God Helps the Poor

A man, so poor that he could not buy matzos dor the approaching Passover, went to his Rabbi to ask for help. The Rabbi promised him he needn't worry, and sent him home with the words: “God will help.”

As Passover approached ever nearer, the poor man's wife raised her cries to the roof. “There is no money to buy clothing for the children, no money to buy matzos. What will become of us with all your praying, when you don't stir out of the house to earn a penny?”

“If the Rabbi said God will help, answered her husband, “then rest assured that God will help.”

“Go to the Rabbi again,” pleaded his wife, “tell him we have not even matzos for Passover. Ask him to help.”

The poor man went again to the Rabbi, and again the Rabbi sent him home with the words: “God will help.”

On his way home the poor man passed by the estate of a nobleman, and seeing a menagerie on this estate, and the great number of animals, he thought sadly: “The animals are kept in plenty, but for my wife and children there is nothing to eat.”

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That night, as the poor man repeated his prayers, he heard a commotion in the street, the loud shouts of boys, and suddenly a window crashed and a [?] monkey flew into the room. The boys, having found a monkey that had escaped from the nobleman's estate and that

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had died, had flung the carcass into the house of the “Jew”. For several minutes the man and his wife stared at the body on the floor, dreading to go near.

“Take it out somewhere and bury it,” said his wife.

The man then took hold of the feet, and as he picked up the body, out of the monkey's mouth poured a shower of gold coins. And they realized it was of this the monkey had died, of gorging himself with his master's gold, and that the flinging of the carcass into the house of the Jew had been an act of God.